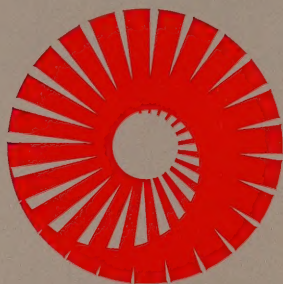


Perspectives on the Quality of Working Life

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Proceedings of a Conference
hosted by the Ontario
Quality of Working Life
Advisory Committee

October 15, 1980, Toronto, Ontario



Ontario
Ministry of
Labour



Ontario
Quality of
Working Life
Centre

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(Summary)

Proceedings of a Conference
hosted by the Ontario
Quality of Working Life
Advisory Committee, 1980

October 15, 1980, Toronto, Ontario

The Ontario Advisory Committee on the Quality of Working Life

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Thomas E. Armstrong, Q.C., Deputy Minister of Labour
for Ontario

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(advisor to the Committee)

Executive Director, Ontario Quality of Working Life Centre
Dr. Hans van Beinum

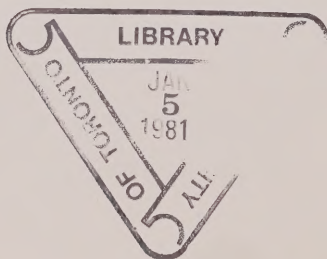


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Foreword

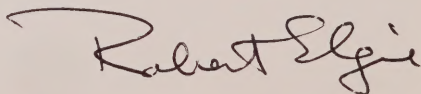
The Honourable Robert G. Elgie
Minister of Labour for Ontario

As I listened to the differing but complementary perspectives expressed by leaders in management, government and labour on the quality of working life, my belief was reinforced that enhancing the quality of working life is a challenge which can no longer be ignored. It is also an opportunity which should be pursued without delay if we care about people as well as the effectiveness of organizations. I am pleased that Ontario has taken an important initiative in Canada in this area as shown by the very richness of the conference participants' ideas and experience.

The speakers and the subsequent discussion have made it clear that QWL is not the same as profit sharing, does not do away with collective bargaining, management responsibilities, or the importance of the role of the union. QWL is not an abstract notion but a recognition of concrete opportunities in real life situations for improving the responsibility of workers in and for their work situations.

It is true that there will be problems associated with encouraging management and labour to support QWL initiatives: anything that affects existing relationships, and involves shifts in established roles and positions, will be resisted by some people. I believe, however, that it is in the interests of both management and labour to promote and develop quality of working life projects. Their motives may be different, but both should be able to acknowledge that new collaborative efforts may be essential for social and economic well-being in these difficult times.

I commend the participants in the "Perspectives" conference for their clear demonstration of leadership in improving the quality of working life in Ontario.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Robert Elgie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the start of the name.

Minister.

Introduction

On October 15, 1980, the Ontario Advisory Committee on the Quality of Working Life hosted a conference called "Perspectives on the Quality of Working Life". This booklet represents a distillation of the highlights of that event.

The Advisory Committee was formed in June 1977 in order to advise the Government of Ontario on possible initiatives which might be taken with regard to improving the quality of working life of people in Ontario. The Committee is composed of leading representatives of management and labour in the Ontario community.

As a result of the recommendations of this joint labour-management Advisory Committee, the Ontario Quality of Working Life Centre was established in December, 1978. The Centre, the first of its kind in Canada, has, as its mission, the enhancement of the quality of working life in Ontario. To accomplish this mission, the Centre is actively involved in the establishment of QWL projects in Ontario organizations, the education and training of individuals and organizations in QWL principles and applications, and the collection and dissemination of information on QWL in order to promote a community interest in the subject.

The focal point of the Centre's broad range of activities is its involvement in the development of real-life field projects. The Centre is currently engaged in a number of projects based on joint union-management involvement and active participation by workers.

The Centre does not view quality of working life as one thing but rather as a domain encompassing all aspects of one's relationship with one's work environment. The Centre believes therefore that in addition to such factors as wages, pension, health and safety there is another set of aspects which are becoming more and more relevant in today's society. They have to do with the characteristics of the immediate work setting and the way in which they affect people. This refers to the nature of the tasks which

people carry out day in day out, year in year out and the way those tasks are grouped into jobs and the manner in which those jobs are connected to the larger organization.

The principles underlying the way in which jobs are designed and work is organized are crucial for the quality of working life because they form the context for people's experiences at work and therefore will determine the meaning of that experience. They are the leading parts determining involvement of people in the work place, responsibility in and for the job, and opportunities for ongoing learning and development.

The "Perspectives" Conference is a 'punctuation' in the development of quality of working life within Ontario. It was a meeting place of people, organizations, ideas, experiences and visions regarding that development. It represented a unique opportunity for mutual learning in a process involving changing working conditions, and new approaches to organizational effectiveness and industrial relations.

Those who participated in the conference were individuals representing organizations interested in the improvement of quality of working life in Ontario and currently active in the development of field projects. Participating organizations included:

Canadian General Electric Company Limited and the
Draftsmen Association (International Federation of
Professional and Technical Engineers)

Canwirco Inc. and the
United Steelworkers of America

Eldorado Nuclear Limited and the
United Steelworkers of America

Ford Motor Company of Canada Ltd. and the
United Auto Workers

Miracle Food Mart and the
United Food and Commercial Workers

Polysar Limited and the
Energy and Chemical Workers Union

Shell Canada Limited and the
Energy and Chemical Workers Union

The design of the "Perspectives" Conference is very much a reflection of the way in which QWL is understood and engaged in by the Centre, that is, as a process of ongoing interaction and learning by management, union and workers.

The key feature of the conference itself was the dialogue generated between participants in the QWL field projects and the Advisory Committee members and the sharing of information and experience between the different field sites which occurred during the afternoon workshops and throughout the day. That exchange provided an illustration of the various phases of field project development. In order to stimulate such a dialogue, perspectives on QWL from the points of view of management, government and labour were given in the morning session.

This booklet contains the proceedings of the morning session entitled "Perspectives on the Quality of Working Life". The perspectives were that of Management, by Roy F. Bennett, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Ford Motor Company of Canada Limited; Government, by T.E. Armstrong, Q.C., Deputy Minister of Labour for Ontario; and Labour, by Bill Horner, Administrative Assistant to Owen Bieber, Vice-President of the United Auto Workers of America. A personal perspective on QWL, was given by Dr. Sidney Harman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Harman International Industries.

The booklet concludes with some reflections on the meaning of those perspectives and the exchange of ideas which characterized the conference.

Introductory Remarks

T.E. Armstrong,

Deputy Minister of Labour for Ontario

Today's meeting is a watershed in the history or evolution of the Centre. It is the first opportunity that the Committee has had to come into contact with those who are actually participating in field projects, as it is for the participants to meet members of the Committee. Therefore I see the purpose of today's meeting as essentially twofold: it will, firstly, give Committee members a chance to hear firsthand how the various endeavours are progressing in terms of your achievements to date and your expectations for the future. I would hope that in the interchange that occurs both during the question period this morning and in the sessions this afternoon, we hear some of your particular problems and successes, and even some of your disappointments. From your point of view, today's event will also give you the opportunity to hear not only the panelists this morning — representatives of labour, management and government who are involved in the quality of working life — but to hear as well from the Advisory Committee members about their role in establishing the Quality of Working Life Centre in Ontario and their views as to the importance of quality of working life in industrial relations and in a broader societal setting.

To give us a somewhat wider perspective, we have two distinguished visitors from the United States, both of whom bring a broad experience in the area of quality of working life.

I see today as very much a learning process. I am going to avoid any rhetoric about what quality of working life means to me, on the assumption that everyone in the audience knows as much about it as I do. I'll be saying something later this morning about the Government's role in supporting and encouraging quality of working life initiatives in Ontario.

A Management Perspective on the Quality of Working Life:

Roy F. Bennett,
President and Chief Executive Officer,
The Ford Motor Company of Canada Limited

WILLIAM DIMMA, President, A.E. LePage Limited:

You hardly need to be reminded that this morning's session is entitled, "Perspectives on the Strategic Importance of Quality of Working Life," and we have three speakers who are going to address that issue. There will be some comments from each of the other three people on the panel, but after a break there will be time left for questions and interaction.

The afternoon session will consist of workshops. The order of speakers will be: Roy Bennett, then Tim Armstrong and then Bill Horner. Roy and Bill are not speaking for either the management or the labour community generally, although I suspect that each of them will be saying things that would be pretty acceptable to a substantial part of their constituency.

Roy Bennett is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Ford Motor Company of Canada. He has been President for very close to ten years and Chief Executive Officer for nine years; and in the kind of turbulent environment in which we live, that shows a lot of staying power. Ford is Canada's largest manufacturing company. Roy came up through the financial route and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, but has also had extensive line experience in marketing and corporate planning.

ROY F. BENNETT, President and Chief Executive Officer,
Ford Motor Co. of Canada Ltd.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It's a pleasure on my part to participate in this session today. To me it is a good illustration of an area where business, labour and government can work compatibly together and reinforce each other's efforts. In Canadian society, that is a highly desirable endeavour for us all to be following, and it's one that in principle I strongly support.

Why is the management of a company like Ford interested in this kind of program? The answer is a very simple one: Because we

think it can be rewarding for our employees, and if it's rewarding for our employees, it's bound to be rewarding for the company. The need for a program like QWL has increased significantly in the past couple of decades. The environment in which our business operates is changing and is becoming substantially more complex than in the past. The nature of the businesses we are in is changing, the nature of government involvement in our business is changing, and the competitive markets are changing. The dynamics of change are on an accelerating pace. It is in this environment that we need all the ingenuity and creativity that can be brought to bear on managing our opportunities and problems. Therefore, to the extent that a company can draw on the strength in the reservoir of the talents in its employ, it stands a better chance of succeeding and progressing in that environment.

In our own case, some of the benefits and needs have been brought into focus by the increasing advent of Japanese competition. A leading American businessman recently said, after having analyzed the Japanese and North American productive comparisons, "The Japanese success in eliciting the participation of the work force is believed to be an important element in their ability to achieve a high level of production quality in first-run production during the last five to ten years." There has been an interesting change in the quality of Japanese products in the last twenty years. It is ironic that there are two islands in the world with leading production capabilities, England and Japan; and we've seen England's productivity and quality go one way and we've seen Japan's quality and productivity go the other way. A significant part of the difference between those countries is the relationship between management and the workers in their respective work forces. We have come to realize that human resources are the company's most important asset. It is one that doesn't appear on the balance sheet, but it's one that will have far more

bearing on a company's success than the tangible assets that have dollar signs in front of them. The factor that appeals to me about the quality of working life concept is that it is a system that tends to reinforce itself. If a program is successful, it does lead to more job satisfaction; it tends to lead to more happiness and contentment in the work place; and, in turn, the happier and more involved the employees are, the more they will tend to become involved. It is a circle that will expand and accelerate as the programs are developed.

I should comment on what we think employee involvement is not. I am using two terms interchangeably. In Ford, we tend to call this program 'employee involvement' rather than 'quality of working life,' because I think it is a more tangible description of what it is. 'Quality of working life' conjures up many diverse impressions in different minds, whereas 'employee involvement' is rather specific in what it denotes — that is, more involvement of the employee in the operations of the company and in the decision-making process through consultation and communication.

It is important that we recognize that employee involvement is not a substitute for good management or labour practices. In other words, if there are fundamental deficiencies in the contractual relationship between the company and its employees, if there are inadequate health and safety understandings, or if there are inadequate communications, employee involvement will not in itself solve these fundamental problems. It's not a substitute for management responsibility and the management decision-making process. This is a responsibility that management has, and must continue to have in the future. One cannot have decision-making processes by committee. Hopefully, employee involvement will lead to better, more informed, better-accepted decisions. Employee involvement is not a cure-all for other problems that might exist in a company.

Employee involvement is not a productivity program under another name. This is one of the biggest apprehensions and concerns on the part of the labour movement. Many companies over the years have introduced various forms of productivity improvement programs, and I'm sure that some companies may introduce a quality of working life program with the mistaken notion that it is a good way to increase productivity. I would be less than honest if I didn't acknowledge that any company going into it would hope that in fact it might lead to productivity improvements, but it is critical that it not be regarded as the principal objective of the program.

Finally, employee involvement is not a short-term program. One cannot introduce an employee involvement program as one might a suggestion program. It is a program that requires a tremendous amount of thought, ground-laying processes, and time, in order to build trust and understanding. The greatest likelihood of mistakes being made is in people charging into it too quickly and expecting immediate returns and results.

Employee involvement is an opportunity for a company to communicate better with its employees and for the employees to become more involved in the company's operation. It gives them an opportunity to participate and to feel more a part of the institution than when they simply put in a given number of hours and collect compensation for the period in which they are employed. Employee involvement very definitely necessitates a change in management style. The employee involvement program is a change from the authoritarian style of management to one of a participatory nature, where there is an opportunity for upward as well as downward communication within the organization. There is no point in seeking advice if you are not prepared to follow at least some reasonable percentage of it. The system will break down quickly if you solicit views, suggestions, or recommendations from

your employees and then proceed to ignore all of them. I hasten to add that there is no expectation for you to accept and respond to all of them. There has to be a reasoned understanding that some of the recommendations, suggestions, advice, or inputs must have some value and must be seen to influence the company's behaviour.

There is no point in starting the program if your whole management team is not involved. If senior management introduces it, but hasn't in fact got its middle and junior management on board, the program will probably be doomed to failure. I think this is particularly true at the first-line supervision level, because it is at the first-line supervision level that the program will fail or succeed. It is not an easy task to get the support of first-line supervision, because the program is in many respects more of a perceived threat to first line-supervision than it is to the workers themselves. The first-line supervisor perceives this participatory role as undermining the authoritarian role that he's played to date. It is very difficult to have first-line supervision understand the full magnitude of benefits accruing to the company as well as to the workers, to accept the new concepts, and to approach the process with enthusiasm and confidence in the workability of the relationship.

I'd like to touch on the relationship with a union. We have established a healthy and mature relationship with the union. The introduction of an employee involvement program introduces new dimensions to that relationship. QWL was a subject which had been discussed with the UAW, and in the 1979 agreement there was a provision that reads as follows: "That the increased involvement of employees in matters affecting their work holds promise for making work more satisfying and can contribute to improving the workplace." The union and company management agreed to provide joint leadership to a program of employee involvement, and that understanding incorporated several specific pieces of

understanding. First, that employee involvement in the program would be entirely voluntary; i.e., there would be no contractual requirements whereby an employee was expected to participate. Secondly, the activities of the employee involvement program would be totally outside the collective bargaining process. In other words, we were not introducing employee involvement as another dimension to the collective bargaining process. Thirdly, the introduction of the program would be based on local plant circumstances and needs because we both recognized that the process was more likely to succeed in some locations than in others, and we did not want to try to have universal implementation throughout the company.

These understandings have some important implications for the collective bargaining process. Firstly, management and labour can cooperate but still bargain. In other words, these are not mutually exclusive relationships between management and their employees. Secondly, the fact that you can have both indicates a mature, well-established relationship with the union — a dimension that is essential in setting up an employee involvement program where there is a collective bargaining process in place. If you have a high degree of friction between management and the union representation of the employees, then the success of an employee involvement program is jeopardized. You need to have trust, confidence, and mutual respect before the program is introduced. Thirdly, the program does provide an opportunity to explore some new concepts together. It is important that this learning process be viewed and accepted jointly and that there be recognition that both parties are learning from the process at the same time.

Having established the agreement with the UAW, we did a couple of things to implement the program. Initially, we issued a corporate policy letter on employee involvement. This letter did three basic things. Firstly, it clearly identified the company com-

mitment to the principle, and stated that the management of our company endorsed and supported the principle of employee involvement. Secondly, it directed that steps be taken to implement programs. This was, again, not a universality, but it said simply that we were going to go ahead and establish programs in some of our operations. Thirdly, it clearly identified the objectives of the program: employee satisfaction and better production operations. The phrase 'better production operations' was not intended to embrace the full scope of operations — 'better' in every context. The word quality, in the very designation of 'quality of working life,' is one that embraces production operations. It is one of the principal benefits that a company hopes will emerge from improved employee satisfaction — in other words, pride in the products being produced and improved quality therein.

We expect our future management methods, as a result of this policy letter, to encourage employee involvement, and we expect our future communications to provide better two-way communications than they have in the past. This process reflects a fundamental change in management style from the authoritative approach to the participative approach. In effect, it's saying to the employees, 'We need your help.' This concept is an evolutionary one which reflects what is likely to happen in changing management styles. I would say that the 70s were probably the 'management by objective' decade. The 80s are likely to be the decade of employee involvement or quality of working life. I don't view QWL as a fad. Through MBO, management's sights were set more clearly on the objectives of the company and the objectives of the people within it. It is a natural evolution from MBO to involving everyone in reaching for those objectives. It is not a change of management priorities but an evolution of management styles that will continue to progress not only throughout the 1980s, but into subsequent decades as well.

We are developing a QWL project in our Oakville assembly plant, with the excellent support of the Ontario Quality of Working Life Centre and Hans van Beinum, whose assistance has been invaluable. The program has risks: first-line supervision is nervous, the process is new and contrary to their traditional management styles. On the part of many workers there is a 'cautious mistrust' of the company's intent in the program. There is a risk that many members of management will expect too much too soon. The success of the program will unquestionably depend on management's belief and commitment to the concept at all levels. You have to involve supervision in the process and provide them with the opportunities to make input before they can carry the process to the workers in the plant. There must be honesty and openness with the employees. Management must listen, must be prepared to act and there must be a great deal of patience and perseverance.

North American industry is at a fork in the road. It will tend to follow either the English or the Japanese examples. In the English example, there has been a continuous increase in the adversarial relationship between management and employees: more friction, more hostility, and probably less satisfaction. In the Japanese example there is a more harmonious relationship and more interaction between workers and management. I'm not suggesting that North America should, or will, adopt the model of Japanese industrial society; I think our cultures are vastly different. But it is the principle and the philosophy of employee-management relations that is at issue.

In conclusion: we are at a very critical stage of the development of our industrial society, and it's my earnest hope and expectation that employee involvement programs and quality of working life will have a major impact on the course of our industrial progress in the next decade.

A Government Perspective on the Quality of Working Life:

T.E. Armstrong,
Deputy Minister of Labour for Ontario

I am pleased to be able to sit at this table with Roy Bennett this morning and to hear about the initiative at the Ford Motor Company with the UAW. I think this is one of the gratifying things that has happened in connection with the activities of the Centre.

I would like to address the topic of 'Government's Role in the Quality of Working Life.' I am not talking about government's initiatives in quality of working life in terms of its own employees, although that is an important topic. The Government's role is to promote quality of working life by facilitating, connecting, and, in a tactful and non-threatening way, persuading labour and management that it is in their common interest to test the validity and value of QWL by embarking on practical field projects — projects that are carefully designed by and for themselves.

Two questions immediately arise from this general statement of purpose: why is Government supporting quality of working life? and, what resources does it have to advance the concept? As to the why question: while adversary collective bargaining was doing a good job in this jurisdiction and elsewhere in Canada, there were elements of adversary collective bargaining that were not addressing important issues in the workplace, and because of the nature of adversary collective bargaining, perhaps could never be addressed by that particular mechanism. We were aware of activities going on within this jurisdiction, in the United States, and elsewhere, that had recognized that there was a complementary mechanism, a more collaborative one, whereby the interested parties could identify common objectives beyond the pale of collective bargaining and make some progress in matters having to do with the shop floor, with mutual payoff to labour and management. Two-and-a-half years ago the Advisory Committee, after having done some preliminary investigations and thinking about the problem of the quality of working life, and having become

more aware of what was happening here in some European jurisdictions, wrote a letter to the then Minister of Labour, that tells us something about how the Committee viewed the quality of working life in the context of Ontario labour relations. I might just share with you several aspects of that letter.

Firstly, it was noted that quality of working life must be, and must be seen to be, more than an abstract notion or gimmick. Effective quality of working life projects, the Committee observed, must be firmly rooted in the real world of industrial relations and not simply an academic or abstract concept. At the same time, the Committee saw quality of working life as something quite separate and distinct from collective bargaining. It's true that in normal bargaining processes, provisions are often negotiated that result in improvements in the quality of employees' working lives and environment. However, it was recognized that quality of working life projects — projects involving a collaborative redesigning of work and working relationships — do not readily lend themselves to traditional adversary collective bargaining. The Committee noted the existence in Canada of certain specific work reorganization and restructuring arrangements carried out under the mechanism of collateral or 'shelter' agreements, which specified that collective agreement rights were to be unaffected by QWL arrangements. Hence the Committee early on saw the need to insulate collective bargaining from quality of working life experimentation. The Committee also observed that while quality of working life projects are distinct from collective bargaining, benefits flowing from QWL — for example, improved employee morale and attitudes, improved union-management communications, lower incidence of mid-contract agreements arbitration, improvements in the flow of information which aid the negotiation process — are important and positive side-effects of many QWL projects. It was also recognized that an important by-product

could well be improvements in productivity and efficiency. But, again, it was important that the rationale must not be placed on that narrow ground alone.

The Committee's letter was not only a letter wherein the Committee was philosophising about quality of working life. It went on to say that, as a result of its deliberations and observations about the scene here in Canada and elsewhere, a quality of working life centre should be established.

While all of the Committee members appreciate the wider societal significance of QWL, they take the view that the world cannot be changed by abstract appeals unless there is a good chance for tangible payoffs on both sides in the near term. Most of the members would agree that behind the practical questions of technique and methodology — semi-autonomous work groups, less external control, less close supervision, more room for creative participation by individuals through the redesigning of work and working relationships, there are some fundamental choices. You have a choice of going on with the type of work organization you have inherited — that is, the one man-one job, top-down, regimented organization — or of choosing an environment with less constraint, less regimentation, and greater opportunity for variety, individual creativity, ingenuity, and collaborative participation. In other words, we want to encourage people to become active, to use their own judgement, to pursue their personal growth at the work place, in order that it will spill over into the rest of their lives. This is what Jack Levine of Steinberg's meant when he said that when we were talking about QWL, we were talking about fundamental social change.

Committee members want to see if those somewhat abstract concepts can be successfully translated into real work situations and if they can, whether the double payoff that QWL enthusiasts talk about — on the human as well as the productivity side — can

really be achieved. There are skeptics who say that some of us are dreaming and that industrial society is not ready for the quality of working life. The skeptics say that things exist because they have evolved to that particular condition, that they cannot be lightly or easily altered, that human institutions tend to be the outcroppings of human nature, and that human nature is slow to change. They also say that if you destroy one set of institutions you end up with a far worse set of institutions. Let me hasten to say that I don't happen to share those doubts, and I believe that breakthroughs can and are being made. I think that now, two years after the creation of the Quality of Working Life Centre, is an appropriate time for stock-taking and a realistic evaluation of what is happening out there in the real world.

I would like to speak now about the resources which the Centre has to promote quality of working life in Ontario, and the way in which those resources are being deployed.

The Centre has a budget of approximately \$600,000 a year. I think I speak for all members of the Advisory Committee when I say that we believe Ontario has been fortunate in attracting someone of such high reputation and such talents as Dr. Hans van Beinum to head up the Centre. Working with Hans are three full-time field project coordinators and one full-time staff member who is on cross-assignment from a prominent trade union. In addition to this, there are four part-time consultants, two of whom devote two days a week to the Centre, and the other, one day per week. Both full- and part-time staff members have varied backgrounds in engineering, psychology, systems design and labour relations. I believe that the Centre staff talent is rather unique. The Centre also has three associates: one from a corporation, Shell Canada; the second, from a prominent trade union; and the third, Eric Trist, from York University, who is one of the true pioneers in the quality of working life field. I think our staffing

arrangements are suited to our mandate; they are flexible enough to meet the changing demands of the various projects being serviced. In addition, the use of part-time staff members and associates enables us to interact with the larger community, to permit natural diffusion to occur on a wider basis across that community.

It would be presumptuous and erroneous for the Government of Ontario or the Ontario Quality of Working Life Centre to pretend that we are the owners of QWL or that we have any rights of proprietorship. The ownership of QWL belongs out in the field. We see ourselves as facilitators and connectors, and, through our project consulting services and the educational and promotional events which we sponsor, are building up a set of collaborative relationships with a number of elements in the community.

There are now six projects at various stages of development in which the Centre has provided guidance and consultative services. There are several more relationships which are on the verge of becoming full-fledged projects. If this target is reached, it can safely be said that the Ontario Centre is well and truly launched. Its ultimate success, of course, will depend on how serious labour and management in Ontario are in re-examining relationships and seeing how workers can play more productive and meaningful roles in their organizations.

It is said by some that it is difficult to launch new initiatives and to take chances at a time of economic recession. I hope that this is not so. I believe that a good case can be made for the proposition that QWL, with its potential payoffs for workers, for employers, and indeed for society at large, should have even more relevance in times of social and economic stress.

A Union Perspective on the Quality of Working Life:

Bill Horner,
Administrative Assistant to the Vice-President
United Auto Workers of America

WILLIAM DIMMA:

Our third and final speaker in this morning's session is the gentleman on my left, Bill Horner. Bill works across all of General Motors on the broad topic of quality of working life. He brings to that job an enormous amount of experience — 39 years as a UAW member on the line and on the staff of the union. He was also a city councillor at Tarrytown for ten years.

BILL HORNER:

Before World War II, even though we were locked in adversarial battles, there was a pride in putting out a job by our workers, and I was one of them. We fought with management tooth and nail, but we felt that we wanted to put out a good job. After the war, the name of the game became production. There weren't enough cars, and so the priority was to get out as many as you could, no matter what the costs were, what the quality was, or what the employees felt. I spent 23 years in that plant before I came on staff, and I learned a lot about plant life. I'm talking from experience when I say that the workers became lost identities. When they became lost identities, they became less loyal to the company, less productive, less quality-minded, and even less loyal to the union. I worked for Irving Bluestone, a man who had thought for many years that our union should be doing something beyond collecting dues, negotiating contracts, fighting grievances, and pursuing complaints. I share the belief that we have to go further than that.

When Irving Bluestone became the Director of the General Motors section of our union, he raised at the board that a quality of work life concept be put in our General Motors contract. The board rejected this. I stress that the union put on the table that we wanted a quality of work life provision in our agreement. Very simply, Bluestone said that we wanted a joint committee to

encourage local management and unions to get involved with this new concept. We put the issue back on the table in the next contract. This was not a management idea. This was our idea — that you have to start thinking about that worker, and how he thinks and feels. In 1973 management accepted it. Most unions are built on problems, and we're very suspicious. We took a lot of heat in 1973 when we even put it on the table. People said, "You can't sit down with management like that, because if you do, you're giving up your traditional role of being a union. The militancy's going to go out of it."

The people on the line say to me, "You know, I don't know what that fancy title is called, 'quality of work life,' 'employee involvement,' 'job participation,' 'blue-collar blues,' you name it; but if it means I'm going to be treated better, and differently, I'll volunteer. I'll put my name on the line, because I want to be treated differently." The guys who have the 'cautious mistrust' are the leadership of the union, who say "It's got to be a production gimmick", or who, through insecurity, ask: "If this thing works, where am I as a union representative?"

Through QWL, we're going to give workers more freedom, a little bit more say, and some input into the decision-making process — a brand new world for workers. They never had those rights before. When I was hired, a worker in our plants was told to do everything — as in the Frederick Taylor theory: break the task down into its smallest parts, tell them what to do, and they'll do it. They don't need any brains. What initiative did those workers have?

The concept of 'worker involvement,' or 'being part of the decision-making process,' has done some wonderful things. I'm convinced that a worker, given that kind of feeling, is a different worker. I think it enhances the union rather than weakens it. I think we're giving it leadership, rather than letting it flow along.

We're in the forefront. What we believe is happening is strengthening the workers' concern about the plant that they work in, about the product they're producing, and about the union that represents them. When I was hired, who worried about the consumer? We just worried about punching a clock and punching out. Who worried about absenteeism? About scrap? Repairs? Not us — that was management's problem. When a plant closes down, it isn't just the union that loses its job; it's also management. However, we became involved with this concept when times were relatively good, not because we were clutching a life preserver.

I don't call these activities programs, because a program has a beginning and an end, but a process, or concept, has continuity, it goes on. Marvellous things have happened, not only for the worker — which is the ultimate thing — but in other ways. People tell me, "I feel like I'm being treated differently now, when I come into the plant; they're asking my opinion." A lot of workers have some good ideas about their job that engineers can't dream of because they are not on the floor. It doesn't matter whether it's an office job or whether it's a foundry; everybody knows his own job a little bit better than we think he does. Everyone has a little bit of pride about his job, if he's allowed to show it and exercise his good judgement.

The union is not going to give up its traditional role: to fight when it has to, as in contract time. Most people spend more time in the plant or office than they spend at home. People say you cannot separate collective bargaining from quality of work life. Well, I think you can. There's an impact, no question about that, but we maintain that it is not going to be a substitute for collective bargaining. We don't let workers decide after a grievance is written, how that grievance is going to be settled. It's not their property any more, it's the property of the union and personnel. We do let them make decisions about their job, though — in terms of

designing their job, their environment, their overtime, hours, and so on. We also tie occupational health and safety and QWL together. They go hand-in-hand, because it's working conditions, it's pride in the organization. If you don't do it at home, why should you do it in the plant? But once nobody cares, the worker doesn't care either.

We get criticized for being in bed with management, and of course we hear the management saying, "If we give that union an inch, they'll want the whole plant." The track record doesn't show that. We've been involved with many joint programs, in health and safety for example. We have joint programs all through the contract: apprentice programs, blood banks, united funds; they work out very well. So, what's so different when we say, "Why not have a joint program on human beings? using human resources? making people feel better?"

Today, the issue is, what are we going to do to improve quality? Because quality is involved with competition. What are we going to do about foreign imports? I'm on the National Committee for Quality and the National Committee for Attendance. The union was never involved with those issues before. We're concerned about how to start turning this around together. It's no longer a management luxury. To us, it means jobs; to the corporation it means profits. We have more in common than in conflict. If you give the North American worker the proper tools and the proper environment, and yes, that almighty proper attitude, there is no foreign competition that can beat him or her.

I use the Tarrytown plant as a prime example — I was there for many years. Out of 12,000 people on a line, 300 people were absent on a Friday night and 300 people were absent on a Monday morning. What kind of quality do you put out when you have 300 people absent? Well, they needed the jobs, because they had the demand. So the jobs went out. And maybe you or I got that car. It

wasn't built very well. That used to be called a management problem. I don't consider that a management problem. It is amazing to me sometimes to hear me talk about quality, absenteeism, a good rapport with the management, putting out a good quality job, with good people, to satisfy the customer. But that's what you have to do today. You have to have the ability to change. That worker will change, or whoever works for you will change. But do you have the ability to change? I don't mean to alter your position as a management or a union person, but to have the ability to see the other guy's point of view. I never used to. It was my point of view or else — fight! Well, the world's changing, and we've got to change with it.

We keep coming up with creative, innovative ideas that will strengthen our membership, strengthen the company, and, yes, strengthen the community we live in. They all go together. My plant was at the bottom of an assembly list of eighteen plants; used to have 2,000 grievances a month; two or three strike votes a year; and one strike every year. We saw the plant deteriorate, so much so that they asked, "What is going to happen to this plant?" When we got a contract, we suggested to our local union, "Why don't you sit down with management and see if you can't agree to some kind of a program in this concept."

The guidelines are very much like this. There will be no loss of manpower as a result of participating in a quality of work life program. You can't change a production standard that's been negotiated as a result of participating in this program. Management, by contract, has the right to take manpower out of the bargaining unit, if an engineering change occurs, or some modification, or some new technology is introduced. They can remove manpower without a fight from us, as long as it's the proper amount of manpower. So, what we're saying in the first two is, you don't have a right to take manpower out just because

you're in a quality of work life program.

We found out by experience that some managements decided that they weren't going to involve the leadership of the union in this concept. They'd go around the leadership and start talking to workers and get them to volunteer, and start implementing concepts without involving the union leadership. When that happened, we had some initial failures. So we said, "You had better start involving the leadership — the representatives on the floor. They have a right to be there when you're talking to the people they represent." Then we said, "We have a national agreement that we negotiate for 150 bargaining units. It's been negotiated, ratified, so there will be no waiving of any of those paragraphs under quality of work life." We also have the right, in General Motors, to have local agreements. We said that if any party, union or management, feels that this concept is disadvantaging them, they can get out, at any time.

We also say, "Slow down. Take a look at what you're doing. Make sure that the next step is a firm step. You're not on a time schedule that you have to meet. It may be slower, but it's sure. What kind of program do you want for your particular plant, operation, office, whatever? Joint input? Yes. Better be. But what's good for our location? Because what's good for Tarrytown may not fit in Canada or another section of the United States. It was tailored for Tarrytown. It also has to be done from the floor up, rather than with a preconceived blueprint."

At that plant it took almost two years to train 3600 people in a voluntary program. We started out with one section, and we told everybody to publicize it. We said, "It's not a mystique, nobody is trying to out-manoeuvre one another." We followed that with joint bulletins by the plant manager and the union representatives. We chose the areas that had high absenteeism, poor quality, many disagreements and grievances, poor relationships with the union,

mixed races and mixed sexes.

After about four months in this program, I was called down to a presentation, and two of the workers said, "We entered this program, first of all, to sabotage it, because we didn't trust it. We thought that this was just a deal between the international union and the corporation, and local management and the local leadership of the union — just another productivity deal. After we were in it for a short time, we started to be treated differently and felt that we were being treated differently. And we liked how we were being treated. We were asked and gave our opinions. And we started to come in to work more often. We started to be concerned about the job."

This particular group installed the back window of a car. They had two main problems that they decided they were going to concentrate on: glass breakage and water leaks. In glass breakage alone; they saved the company \$68,000. They were proud of this fact. They were proud that they were able to come up with these ideas together, as a group. Their absenteeism fell off from 25% to 12%, and today it's running at less than 3%. Their grievance load fell off, their rate of discipline fell off and their quality went up. As a result of that example, 3600 people volunteered. That plant shot from number seventeen in poor quality to number one in quality. When General Motors had to decide which plants to build the Citation in, they gave it to Tarrytown. Today, with thousands of workers laid off around the circuit, we have people working in that plant with ninety days seniority. There isn't one person laid off.

My union does not endorse quality of work life per se. In 1973 we had one Vice-President in favour of it. A straw vote was taken the other day. We have twenty-six people on the board: eighteen voted in favour of it. We're coming out of the wilderness, because today a union can't afford to sit on its haunches and say that all it

has to do is collect dues and negotiate contracts. The company can't afford to say, "We'll run the ship according to the way we did it forty years ago, without changing our style, and get the same results." That isn't going to work either. Discipline was one of the strongest things that management used to use to correct absenteeism, to correct quality, to correct people's demeanor. It doesn't work. I see us strengthening our position with our membership, because they see us giving it leadership.

QWL is all about changing our style about individuals, giving them credit for being people who can contribute to whatever organization they belong to: management or union.

Question Period

QUESTION: Mr. Horner, you said there were 3600 volunteers in Tarrytown. What was the number of the entire workforce?

BILL HORNER: It was 3600. The original group was thirty-six — the glass group which installed the back window of the car. What we did there was to publicize what was happening — to the grievance load, the discipline, the morale, the salvage, the efficiency of the department. It was all logged so that everybody could see it. Nothing gets around the plant more quickly than worker to worker. People wanted to join; we then had to train the whole plant. It took two years to do that because we trained joint union and management trainers — twelve teams of two people. They then trained the other people in the plant.

QUESTION: Mr. Horner, do you have bargaining units who have tried it and then decided to opt out, and if so, what were the basic causes for opting out?

BILL HORNER: Yes, we have had some failures. One program that failed, where the union opted out, was in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It started off as a joint program, and the union let management run the program. The politicians then started to label it “a company program” and they campaigned against the people that were in office and beat them on that basis. Frankly, there wasn’t anything “joint” about it. The people who campaigned and won, now say, “we’re not opposed to a quality of work life concept, but we want to participate in it.”

In an unorganized plant in Oklahoma City, there was a quality of work life concept unilaterally imposed by management. The people who were running the QWL program, bargaining-unit people, were the people who were opposed to the union, and fought the union in the drive to organize. They lost and we organized the plant. The new union leadership said, “We’re

throwing out that program — we never sponsored it and we don't want any part of it." However, I'm going down next week to help establish a joint program where their union will participate.

QUESTION: What kind of training were you speaking of, besides problem-solving?

BILL HORNER: Twenty plants just have quality control circles. That is the easy way to get into QWL, because there is less training to be done, and it's primarily problem-solving. Workers are trained in problem-solving and meet once a week to discuss a problem, such as scrap. In one meeting I attended, the first question was, "Management, you're paying for first-rate steel. We make the gears in this plant. The bars of steel should be coming in round and they come in square or oval, and we have to knock all that extra scrap steel off before we get down to gauge in the bar stock. Why don't you look at the guy who's purchasing your steel?" The group was asked, "Do you see anything different now than when you were working in the old way?" They said, "We see that we have input now. People are asking for our ideas and we're giving them. No one ever asked us about reducing scrap before." One man said, "We have the right to talk about something that will affect our jobs and affect the company's position."

The training in Tarrytown is probably the most sophisticated that we have. Firstly, the union leadership and management participated in a seminar on the meaning of quality of work life. They agreed on what it was. In training the workers, these questions are asked: What are we trying to do? What is the objective? How does this fit into the worker's life? How does it fit into the company's life? What does it mean in the final analysis? What is the quality of work life? What is employee involvement? What is the union's position? — both the local union and the international union. The foreman gets the same training as the worker (twenty-four hours

of training paid for by the company). What is the decision-making process here at Tarrytown? How are decisions made? What's the structure of our division? What's the structure of the corporation? What's the structure of the local union? What's the structure of the international union?

How do you get people interested in our plant? Most people used to clock in, go to their job, at lunch time go to the lunch room, the rest room or the medical department — and then go home. They would never know what was being built at the other end of the plant. Most people appeared not to care, but in fact they did. They took a tour of the plant in pictures, as part of the training program.

Problem-solving was one part of the training, as was communication — two-way communication. One-way communication was always from the foreman to the worker. If a worker is going to become part of the decision-making process, he or she must have self-confidence, to be able to say to a group, "Here's my idea of making this job better and improving efficiency." The training consists of different exercises which bring both groups together, management and union, to study "How can we work together to make a better organization?"

QUESTION: Both Mr. Bennett and Mr. Horner referred to the voluntary nature of QWL, from the management, the union, and the employee point of view. Management and the union may either accept it or reject it; but with respect to the employee, it is possible to implement the program and still accommodate those who have not volunteered?

BILL HORNER: Participation is not mandatory. An individual may receive the benefits of a QWL project, but he or she does not have to participate, although they may be directly involved in the group's work. Management can't coerce them, and you can't

coerce them. However, I'm seeing more and more people who originally said, "I don't want to participate" who now acknowledge, after six years, that it's working.

STAN SURMA, Ford Motor Company: One of the requisites before you can start a program is to make sure that your management, from the top down, is committed to employee involvement. For instance, we've indicated that we have a corporate policy regarding employee involvement. More specifically, we have a plant right now where the union is saying, "We want to get going on employee involvement," but we've told them to hold off because management isn't ready. We haven't done our homework yet with the management group, primarily the first and second level of supervision. Until we've worked with them and made sure that they really want employee involvement in that plant, we're not ready to move. I've also had experience in other locations where we started projects where a general supervisor in the second tier is not really involved to the extent that he should be, or he's fighting the system; and we had to call a halt to the entire program and do some retraining to make sure that he understood exactly what employee involvement was all about.

QUESTION: Mr. Surma, Roy Bennett and you have just spoken about the change from an authoritarian to a participatory management style. What work have you done around management style in senior management levels?

STAN SURMA: Firstly, our policy generally has been MBO (or management by objective). That has become more and more a participative approach. Secondly, we have a policy of involving more people in the whole communication process, from the top management level on down. For instance, we have a task force amongst our senior people whose objective is to improve com-

munications, not only within the management group, but all the way down into the plant level. When we talk about employee involvement, much of it is strictly improving the overall level of communications all the way down. We're trying to impress upon our management group the value of departmental meetings. We're trying to improve our communication process through newsletters and filming. Roy Bennett has made a practice of holding quarterly meetings or "tell it like it is" sessions with our headquarters people.

QUESTION: In addition to the benefits that accrued both to the union members and to the employers as a result of redesign of the work environment, does the employee share in any material gain through improved profits?

BILL HORNER: First of all, in our contract it would be a double whammy for management. We have a provision in the national agreement for an automatic wage increase, the Annual Productivity Factor.

STAN SURMA: Bill, in projects that you've been involved in, how do you handle the continuity of either management or union leadership?

BILL HORNER: There is a lot of transition happening in General Motors. Younger people are getting promoted — and most of them are people-oriented. I haven't seen anything that would disturb us in that sense. Where the union membership sees its leaders (of the local union) in the forefront of QWL, they have been re-electing them. In union politics, that's the name of the game. So there hasn't been any upheaval.

QUESTION: I've just one question about the resources that are provided, for example, the implementation of the training programs, the design of them originally, etc. Was that done by staff groups, or was it done by the people themselves?

BILL HORNER: The Tarrytown program was started by an outside consultant who is an expert in problem-solving. His mission was to train a local union guy and a management guy. To train them to be coordinators in the field of problem-solving techniques and many of the other things. He had a 37-day contract. I said to management, "Don't let this guy perpetuate himself into retirement here. What we want him to do is to train the trainers so they can train the people in the plant themselves." That's what he did.

QUESTION: In Ontario, the quality of work life projects which appear to be emerging, and some of the ones which are actually in effect, like Steinberg's and Shell, appear to revolve mainly around a redesign of the structure of the work place. Mr. Horner, I don't hear you saying that. You talk about quality circles, and that doesn't appear to me to be a redesign. Is a redesign essential? Or is it really something the participants work out themselves, something that takes various forms?

BILL HORNER: Our main thrust has not been job design, unless that's what the workers want. If the workers feel that they want to change their jobs, they should have the right to do so, in line with efficiency. For example, I was involved with a group which said, "We would like to design, not the job, but the conveyor line. If you redesigned it in such a way, it would make our jobs easier, it would save some stock, would bring the stock closer to us and we would have less chance of losing stock." They worked out a redesign of the conveyor line, as a group. Management put it into practice, and it was a very good operation.

QUESTION: It is fair to say, then, that in the General Motors plants, where there are varied forms of QWL, that there isn't any significant change in the role of the first-line supervisor?

BILL HORNER: I don't necessarily see his role dramatically changing. On the other hand, I see him getting more involved with his people, because he's not spending all his time negotiating grievances. As a result of that, his role in the employees' eyes is changing, because now he's saying, "Can I help you?" I think that's what he's really hired to do, not to be the transmission-belt for the grievance procedure.

STAN SURMA: I think a normal offshoot of a quality of working life project or employee involvement project is that the role of the first-line supervisor will change significantly. He's going to become more of a leader, a planner. Because he is not going to get involved with the day-to-day problems, he can become more involved with planning his workload. The other thing, of course, from a management point of view, is that he also becomes more involved with decisions that affect him in upper management.

WILLIAM DIMMA: In this concept, of quality of working life, or employee involvement, we have something that's more than a fad, something that's evolving and changing, that's dynamic, that has potential. A lot of that potential is still unrealized, it is potential. I think we can all see that it's not just something that's going to peak like a meteor or rocket and then disappear; it's something much more pervasive than that. It's a little bit like the elephant and the six blind men — you can approach it from different sides and get different perspectives. Hopefully, this meeting has helped to bring a little bit more commonality to that perspective.

A Personal Perspective on the Quality of Working Life:

Dr. Sidney Harman,
President and Chief Executive Officer,
Harman International Industries Incorporated.

CLIFF PILKEY, Ontario Federation of Labour:

Dr. Sidney Harman brings unique qualifications and personal experience to the role as our keynote speaker in today's meeting. He's been a successful industrialist, educator, and senior public service executive, earning a strong reputation in the fields of overall management, executive development, public policy development, marketing, finance, labour-management relations, and quality of working life.

DR. SIDNEY HARMAN:

One of the early lessons we bureaucrats learn is that if you are to address a significant and august gathering, you had best start with a hilarious story, and be ready to conclude with a lovely bit of poetry. I want to demonstrate to you that I learned at least half of that lesson: here's my hilarious story.

It has to do with a subject which will be at least implicit through the comments I will be making — it has to do with trust and leadership. It is a story of an intrepid mountain climber, who somehow lost his footing, found himself tumbling head over toe to what clearly would be his ultimate death at the bottom of this limitless chasm; when, at the very last moment, he managed to reach forward and grasp the one remaining limb of the one remaining tree. And clinging to that limb for dear life, he turned his head heavenward and implored, "Is there anyone up there?" And a deep, sepulchral voice boomed through that canyon: "I am here, my son. Let go of that branch, and I will take care of you." The climber asked, "Is there anyone else up there?"

I think I will leave it up to you to somehow lace that story into the observations I will be making. I can't resist three specific recollections that seem to me in one way or another to capture much of the meaning of QWL, as I have experienced it.

The first of them has to do with a practice that I engaged in my two centuries as the Under Secretary of Commerce of the United States. What I did was to arrange to work in several of the agencies of the Department at a medium-level civil servant role. I made no effort to disguise who I was. I was determined, because of my commitment to this material, to see what I could learn about how life was among the bureaucrats who, in the United States, are the endless target of criticism by those in industrial life and those leaders of government who manage forever to identify them as the principal source of our difficulties. I found, in every agency that I worked in, very much the same circumstances, very much the same attitude. One particularly comes to mind: I joined the Fisheries Department — the National Oceanographic-Atmospheric Administration is one of the countless agencies of the United States Department of Commerce. We had just declared the 200-mile fishing limit, and for some months this group where I was given employment had the responsibility of developing a report on what was happening in the 200-mile fishing arena: what other nations were catching; whether they were in fact respecting the sanctions that existed there; and in other words to provide us with detailed information about what was going on. The chap I was working for in many ways was typical of the civil servants I have met in Washington. He was bright, young, of a modest family, lived modestly; well-educated; and deeply troubled. He told me that the information which he embodied in this report reached him every month, and he did not know the source. The material somehow flowed in. It was his job to take that information, to plug it into the document, and to pass it on. He told me that in the third month of that exercise, he had become somewhat daring, and he had decided to add a paragraph to the end of this standard expression, a paragraph in which he somehow took the liberty of making observations about the material that he had been dealing with, and perhaps, here and there, of making a recommendation or two.

What troubled him was that not only did he have no knowledge of where the information he plugged into that letter came from, he never saw the product of his work after it left him. He had no idea where it went, nor had anybody ever responded to one of those footnotes. The consequence of that is that he seemed somewhat uncertain as to whether anybody had ever read one, or for that matter if they had, whether they had found anything worthwhile in them. "Where," he asked me, "is it your understanding that this report goes?" And I said, "It is my understanding, my friend, that it goes to the Under Secretary of Commerce. But I have never seen it."

That experience was, for me, a metaphor of what is so fundamentally awry in the bureaucracy that I am familiar with. Those people long for a meaningful connection to the work they do. Those people are alienated — not because of their indifference, but because of the system in which they work. Alienated from their work; alienated from their associates; and consequently, in terrible danger of being alienated from life. And until the government of my country understands that, its many efforts at reorganizing the civil servants, its many efforts at reorganizing the personnel of government, are, I am convinced, doomed to failure.

Another memory: I spent about ten days, a little over a year ago, in Sweden, much of that time visiting the remarkably interesting Volvo plants. You know that Volvo represents some 6-7% of the gross national product of Sweden, and is, of course, very, very consequential in that country. I particularly remember being ushered through two plants in Shovda, where engines were being manufactured; one was the so-called "old" plant, and the other the new, modern engine plant. The same engines were being made in both factories. I recall this incident because, if nothing else has ever taught me, that should have taught me not to proceed too glibly on my own assumption about truth, about other verities, and about the quality of working life. I went through that old

plant, hearing all kinds of apologies from my guide, and wondering to myself, what was so terrible about it? I thought it a rather effective plant in virtually every respect. The one room that did trouble me was approximately half the size of this one; it was the room in which they tested the engines. It was noisy, it was dirty, and there were possibly fifteen operatives in that room while these engines were being raced and while they were testing the various functions of the engines. As quickly as I could, consonant with my dignity, I got myself out of that noisy, dirty room, and then continued through the rest of the plant.

Soon they took me to the new, modern engine plant; and I was particularly interested in observing the way in which that new, modern engine plant tested the engines. It was very different indeed. Every engine was in an air-conditioned room. All the wiring to the instrumentation moved through that air-conditioned and sound-proofed room to a console at which sat the operator, testing the functions of the engine and free to enter the room if he needed somehow to lay hands on that engine — rarely necessary. I thought to myself, and communicated my wisdom to my host, “This is simply marvellous. How do you ever get people to work in that engine-testing room in the old factory?” “Oh,” he said, “that’s really very simple. You must understand that, for many people, work is part of their culture, that the societal aspects of work are crucially important to them. The people who work in that engine-testing room in the old plant value their connections to their associates and their peers very much more than they would value air-conditioning; and if you take another look, you’ll see that everybody in this new plant who’s testing an engine is sitting alone, isolated not only from the engine but from everybody else. There are those people who will respond to this kind of work, and there are those people who will respond to the other society; and we have applications for both.” I learned there one of the fundamentals of the quality of working life, which is that there is no

single sacred body of information, there is no one way of determining that this is the one singular truth which is somehow applicable elsewhere. The real test of all this material is the test of our ingenuity, the test of our ability to interpret the total circumstances in which we are operating.

The third of my recollections has to do with the time, some months ago, that I returned to the JBL loudspeaker factory in California. JBL, the largest of the divisions of Harman International, manufacturer of what is generally conceded to be the finest line of loudspeakers in the world; a company which, when I left it three years ago to join the government, was a lyric place, where the relationship among the managed and the managers was, in my judgement, exemplary; where I could walk through the factory and identify the people by name and virtually everyone would talk with me; where a spirit of genuine unity existed, of which I was enormously proud. As I walked back through the plant three years later, I found few faces that turned to greet me at all. Many of them were new to the company, but the old ones were truly angry with me for having deserted them. I found a place so transformed as to be non-recognizable. I even stumble now as I remember the moment when I stopped to greet a man I had known on one of those production lines for sixteen years, and as we talked he said to me, "I want you to know something. I would no longer be willing to purchase the product I make." I was deeply hurt — not by that, but by my awareness of what that said to me of what had happened in that plant. What really had happened, in a sentence, is that that place, in three years, had lost its heart.

I could dwell for some length on each of those episodes, but together they provide for me a set of recollections that illuminate in a special way much of my experience in this field.

They lead me to think of the recent work of Dan Yankelovich, who about a year ago reduced much of his study to what I think of as the Yankelovich Synthesis. He was identifying the significant

changes in attitude among people who work for a living. They were essentially these: First, a growing commitment to financial security — even, if necessary, at the sacrifice of their own consuming. Second, a lowering of their general expectations, with respect to level of life — certainly with respect to financial aspirations; and third, a growing need for greater control over their lives and their destiny.

That synthesis seems to me to suggest the key to what we are joined in, with respect to our interest in the quality of working life. It needs to be seen against the scale of complexity of the world in which we live, a world so complex that, in my judgement, it challenges the seismic changes that are identified with the Copernican and Industrial Revolutions. We are living in a new era of revolution, characterized particularly by its inordinate complexity. Think of it! Around the world, a gigantic explosion of population; a severe and continuing energy crunch; the revolution of microprocessing, with all its wonders and all its alarms; the continuing unpredictability and uncontrollable character of savage weather everywhere around the world; the growing interconnection and interdependence of nations everywhere around the world; the clear irrelevance of what we've regarded as the traditional economics; the vast new communications network that defines our existence on earth. In so complex a society, it seems evident that we must all begin a serious re-examination of assumptions underlying the way in which we have proceeded industrially for so many decades. We must seriously challenge the fundamental concept that somehow, in the tension between those who do the work and those they do the work for, lies the road to creativeness. Everything in our experience tells us that that is obsolete. Everything in our experience argues that a new synthesis must somehow be generated by labour, by management; that we must find a new, more effective, more human way to develop that set of relationships.

In a plant of ours, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, I approached Owen Bieber of the UAW, and proposed to him that we recognize the utter foolishness in which we had been engaged for years in the collective bargaining process. This will not be news to any of you, but I enjoy the recital, so, though I promise to make it brief, I want to offer this scenario — so traditional, so typical: You begin the negotiating process four or five months before the contract comes to its conclusion. Nothing very much happens in the first three months. You talk about shop rules, you talk about non-economic matters, you jockey into position. The flame begins to glow somewhat brighter. The anxieties of the people — not only with management, but with their representatives in the union — begin to become exacerbated. You come to the last month; and now you break into a trot. Now we really have to get down to work. The meetings become more intense. We begin to deal with the hard flesh of that contract, with the economics of the contract. There's got to be a lot of noise; there's got to be a lot of 'smoke-filled-roomism,' there's got to be a lot of anxiety. In the last days, the tension builds, the atmosphere on the floor is impossible to describe — havoc, anxiety. In many situations, certainly in the automotive industry, many plants are running at overtime all the time, because they have contracts with the automotive makers to guarantee that there will be no interruption for Ford or General Motors or whoever, in the event that there's a strike in the supplier's place. So, under the worst possible circumstances — everybody distracted by this negotiation — there goes overtime. And what's the level of the product? What's the level of the quality? And, for heaven's sake, what's the level of life in that plant? Simply disgraceful. Totally wasteful. "Owen," I said, "you and I know this is not good for us, it is not good for the UAW, it is not good for our people, and it is not good for the country. How about our getting together and having an early negotiation, which will come out the same way, but we will save all this waste and all

this anxiety?" Owen Bieber's response to me was, "Let me educate you, Sidney. There is no way on earth that we would carry on such a negotiation with you, if indeed it produced the most beautiful contract ever written. It would not work. Our people would be convinced that we had sold them out. We've got to go through that damned silly charade that you've just described. But you've got a lot to do with it. The people in that plant don't trust you. They don't trust the management; and under those circumstances, there is no way that we could co-operate with you on the terms that you are suggesting." Nor did they; and we went through the classic process, with the classic costs.

Four years ago in Bolivar, Tennessee, I was dealing with one of the truly great people of my life experience, Irving Bluestone, who has recently retired as Vice-President of the UAW, but who had become very interested in quality of working life, and had caused, together with us, the beginnings of the program in the Bolivar plant. That program had generated so many interesting, then essentially new, relationships. That program had engaged the workers in that plant in the decision-making process to design their lives at work. That program had generated the darndest school I have ever heard of in my life — a school that filled every empty office and closet in that ancient old plant. People were learning in a culture of silence, in an area of the United States which was old farming country, where a major dialogue consisted of "Yup" or "Nope" — people were learning public speaking. People learned twenty-four in a class how to play the piano. We had one old upright piano in that plant, and everybody learned on a cardboard keyboard and then translated it magically to that piano. There were people taking French lessons, because someone working in that plant knew how to speak French. And, perhaps most interesting of all, there were people in the Bolivar, Tennessee plant learning a course which we entitled "The Arithmetic of Business."

We taught them the elements of costing, of a profit and loss statement, of a balance sheet of a proper company. We formed one of the very first employee stock ownership trusts, and as a consequence, they were receiving our annual reports, our reports to the Securities and Exchange Commission; and they were able to study and read them.

Forbes Magazine ran an article on me with the arresting headline, "Sidney Who?" in which they pointed out that I, whom nobody had ever heard of, was one of the highest-paid executives in the United States that year. When I came down to Bolivar, Tennessee, that Forbes article was planted all over the plant; and when I attended the meeting of the Working Committee, of course I introduced myself as "Sidney Who," and everybody in the Working Committee joked with me about what a rip-off I was perpetrating on the company and its shareholders. The whole nature of that relationship was so totally different.

We had an opportunity in Bolivar to quote on a contract which we were able to measure in terms of the number of jobs it meant — if we received the contract, there were 282 jobs. We gathered the people of that plant together, explained to them what the circumstances were; and, as I understand it from my friends in the UAW, wrote industrial history, because the proposal on that contract was generated through task forces of the workers and the industrial engineers and the cost people in the plant. We won the contract, and we won the 282 jobs. I don't know of a more singular event in the history of that company, and I have never heard of that process being generated anywhere else.

When we turned to the UAW with a proposal that we do an early contract negotiation, Irving Bluestone said, "Let's give it a shot." And the difference is so apparent. The people working in the plant had sufficient trust in us — certainly had sufficient trust in their union — that the contract was signed three months before

the expiration of the old. The new one began a day after the contract was signed: the employees in the plant had the advantage of the new contract three months longer than they otherwise would. It was one of those remarkable and rare circumstances in which you had a positive sum gain — everybody came out the winner. The contract expired three months ago and there was an easy renewal or reconstruction of that contract.

And it seems to me that there is, in that history, something that speaks to the real possibilities in that need — to reformulate the way in which we proceed, to re-examine the assumptions which have been mythological, if historical, in our past; and to move forcefully to the generation of a new synthesis, to a new set of relationships. It seems to me, as I have reflected on all this material, as I listened to the panel discussions this morning, that probably our most precious resource are men and women who have the initiative, the impulse, and the incentive to reach beyond their own specialties; to reach for an understanding of how the whole thing works. To think about complexity as intriguing rather than oppressive. We need people like that at every layer of work. Not just in top management, but through the entire structure.

I was really taken by Stan Surma's comments in the question and answer session this morning, when he cautioned, in effect, that if one is truly interested in bottoms-up, participative democracy, one had better start at the top. In the absence of a genuine commitment by top managers to programs of quality of working life, nothing will happen. In the absence of genuine commitment by supervisors — that critical centre so often ignored — to the principle of quality of working life, disaster is guaranteed; and why should it not be? Consider: in contradiction of the general mythology that oppressed people seek freedom, the history of the world makes it very clear that, overwhelmingly, oppressed people seek to change places with the oppressor. And the history of industry makes that most particularly clear. How frequent is it

that the supervisor has come to that position after fifteen years on the line — fifteen years in which he, or she, has felt somebody's heel in the back of his, or her, neck? How unnatural is it for that supervisor — finally freed from the position of the oppressed, and now in the traditional role of policeman, of warden — to be not altogether eager to yield that authority because somebody says it's a good thing to do? Unless we are able to develop organizational arrangements which broaden the role of the supervisor, which move that person from a vertical relationship with his people to a horizontal relationship, until we reach the point where that horizontal relationship connects that department with the department that feeds it, connects it to the department which it feeds — much in the figure, if you like, of that interesting fisheries metaphor of a number of minutes ago — until that has happened, until the supervisor becomes part of that matrix, we are going to find very serious trouble in generating quality of working life programs in any organization. I share the sense that we cannot start programs of this sort and hope to see them truly develop if we begin only at the blue-collar level. This material must work at the level of middle management, must work at the level of top management, and it is my personal experience, and it is my conviction, having spent much time talking with others who have been through this experience, that in the end, the principal beneficiary of such programs as this is, in fact, the person at the top.

We organize most of our industries in a series of pyramids: the smaller the company, the fewer the pyramids; the larger the company, the more the pyramids. But there is always one giant pyramid with the Chief Executive Officer at the very top — everybody else homogenized within that pyramid; all there, functionally, to support that Chief Executive Officer, to make certain that nothing interferes with his omniscience, with his vision, with his fundamental rights. God forbid the CEO should ever be in a position to say, “I blew it!” God help us if he should ever find

himself saying, "I'm persuaded," or "I made an error." We work so desperately to make sure that doesn't happen; yet in organizations which open themselves up to life, which open themselves up to QWL, that person at the top of the pyramid, if he's worth anything at all, begins to discover one of life's glorious lessons, and that is: you don't have to be right all the time. You don't have to be so sanctimonious. Indeed, the greater respect for that person arises when he can participate in a meeting, sharing the material of the meeting, as opposed to chairing the meeting. When he can deal with the balance of the facts, rather than only with the facts. Quality of working life programs in every organization I know of have, as one of their very special benefits, freed the executive, so that his horizons have expanded, so that he has left the world of participative mediocrity to join the world of participative democracy. Thus, everybody has benefitted.

I remember talking to the foreman in the plant at Bolivar who had taught everybody on his line how to do his job. "Aren't you a little bit afraid that in yielding all of this knowledge you will have yielded all of your power?" His memorable response was, "You know, it's the darndest thing. I find that the more power I yield the more power I've got."

It is the essence of my observations today that we have long reached the point where we must, in industry — and, for that matter, in government — find the way to create a genuine equilibrium between the mind and the heart — to marry those elements in that new synthesis which will provide us with the promise of what we are most capable of producing.

I had threatened at the outset that I would start with a hilarious story and that I would somehow, in the tradition of us bureaucrats, finish with a piece of poetry. I won't disappoint — me, at least, in that respect. Here is something 2500 years old, which I treasure because I think it has in it the essence of everything that all of us have been working with and toward. It is

from Mencius, to this effect:

“The men of old, seeking to clarify and diffuse throughout the Empire that light which comes from looking straight into the heart, first set up good government in their own states. Desiring good government in their own states, they first organized their families. Wishing to organize their families, they first disciplined themselves; desiring to discipline themselves, they first rectified their hearts.”

SEAN O'FLYNN, Ontario Public Service Employees Union:

Dr. Harman, I'd like to thank you on behalf of the guests here today for the presentation that you've made to us. I started off 25 to 30 years ago as a seminarian. Now, when I listen to you speaking today, I wonder, where am I? What am I doing here? I am the President of a public service union, and I am talking with people who are managers — and we seem to have come full circle.

What are we talking about? We're talking about alienation; we're talking about values; we're talking about principles. Is this the world of work as we know it? Is this how society looks at the world of work? It is not. So, I would say that the enterprise that we have entered upon is no small enterprise. It is indeed a revolution that we are about. While you might not want to be associated with the usual connotations of the word “revolution,” I put it to you that that is what we are about. As Dr. Harman has said, it cannot be something fickle, something that is a whim. It cannot be something that is based on the personality of one man, as he showed: when the one man disappeared, the structure fell to pieces. So it has to be something that is philosophical, something that is basic, something that takes into account that workers are human too, and that they spend a lot of their time at work, and that they do not cease to be human while they are working. These are the elements that I took from Dr. Harman's speech.

I thought he wasn't going to give us that piece of poetry, but I

have a piece too that I think would be useful and pertinent. I remember years ago, the poem of Longfellow, which said:

Tell me not in mournful numbers
Life is but an empty dream.
For the soul is dead that slumbers
And things are not what they seem.
Life is real, life is earnest
And the grave is not its rest.
'Dust thou art, to dust returnest,'
Was not spoken of the soul.

I won't bore you with the rest of it, but it ends up by saying,

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime.
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints in the sands of time.
Footprints that perhaps another,
Striding o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother
Seeing, shall take heart again.

And I put it to you that people like Dr. Harman, who have the courage of their convictions, and who have a vision of how life could be rather than how it is — are indeed the kind of people that Longfellow was speaking of when he said that they would leave "footprints in the sands of time."

Some Views on Sustaining Change

**Dr. Hans van Beinum, Executive Director,
Ontario Quality of Working Life Centre**

In spite of the different perspectives given by the speakers from union, management and government it was very encouraging to observe their shared commitment to enhancing the quality of working life. As well, they have demonstrated a common understanding about the challenge of the future. This challenge recognizes that it is one thing to initiate change but it is quite a different thing to sustain it. The various examples given at this conference of conditions which have to be met in order to improve the quality of working life in a viable way can all be grouped under the common denominator: how to sustain change.

The 1970s were characterized by demonstrating that quality of working life projects could be initiated by learning how to engage in a participative way in processes of changing the relationship between workers and their immediate tasks, and by learning about the relationship between the social and the technical systems.

There are many illustrations in the world of projects which got off to a good start and which, after a number of years, came to a grinding halt. It is interesting to note that this happened to both successful and promising developments and to projects fraught with difficulties. Both the success and the failure became encapsulated thereby preventing their own further development and also diffusion to the wider system.

At this conference strong attention was drawn to the great importance of the role of first line supervision and middle management for sustaining change in the work place. Similar views were expressed regarding the changing role of the union and the importance of leadership given by the union to quality of working life developments.

These concerns about keeping quality of working life developments alive, managing sustained change, avoiding encapsulation and the recognition of the crucial importance of the role of

first line supervision, middle management and union officials are illustrations of the fact that although quality of working life developments take place in situations with distinct boundaries such as a section, a work group, a division, a plant, they are at the same time integral parts of larger wholes. They are linked to the larger system in many ways: by people, organizational procedures, interdependencies in the sphere of production, values, and attitudes. In their linking roles, the foreman, supervisor, middle management, shop stewards and union officials are therefore important pivots between the part and the whole.

In practice we are dealing with the development of quality of working life in its concrete operational sense by means of facilitating change in concrete and finite settings. At the same time, we are dealing with the challenge of how to facilitate total organizational change. We are dealing with changing the whole as well as the part; with a never-ending, on-going process and not with a distinct project. On the surface we are working with the parts but in actual fact we are engaged in changing the whole.

The issues faced when attempting to sustain change range from the implications of changes of the content of jobs for appraisal systems to questions dealing with the way in which values underlying job design are related to the values underlying long-range company strategies.

Crucial in managing the part-whole relationship is our understanding of the way in which the whole is represented in the part. In other words, to what extent are significant elements in the particular work setting in which quality of working life developments take place consonant with or in conflict with the practice, style, culture or values of the total system. Our inability to manage these linkages has been a major factor in the lack of development in the field of QWL. A basic difficulty in managing these pivotal issues lies in the fact that, in many cases, the pattern

and nature of the linking issues do not match the existing management system because they either cut across it, or are fundamentally dissonant with it.

In my view, the 1980s will be characterized by tackling the question of learning how to relate the parts to the whole, i.e. relating the changes on the shop floor to the company as a whole, learning what the meaning of local union experience is for the role of the union in general. The challenge is to discover the nature of the relationship between micro and macro.

Organizational commitment and leadership essential under normal circumstances play an even more vital role in QWL developments. The part-whole relationship cannot be managed unless there is the kind of leadership in the larger system with the understanding, skills, attitude and power necessary for managing the unavoidable tension. This is true for both the union and management.

The thrust of the quality of working life in the 1980s inevitably has to include the quality of the relationship between systems, the quality of interfaces. Only then are we making progress with regard to ensuring and safeguarding the development of quality of working life within systems.

The identification and the management of the leading pivots is crucial for the sustained development of quality of working life. The significance of the "Perspectives" conference is that it is linking not only past to future but connecting significant people, organizations and experiences.

The Speakers — Biographical Notes

ROY F. BENNETT

Roy F. Bennett, a native of Winnipeg, Manitoba, was elected President of The Ford Motor Company of Canada Limited on November 16, 1970, and became Chief Executive Officer the following year.

Born March 18, 1928, Mr. Bennett obtained most of his education in Toronto. He qualified as a chartered accountant in 1953 and was elected a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario in 1973.

He joined Ford of Canada in 1956 and held a variety of positions, including Assistant Controller, Director of Corporate Planning, and General Marketing Manager. Mr. Bennett was appointed Vice-President-Finance in 1965 and elected a Director of Ford of Canada in 1966.

He is a member of the Policy Committee, Business Council on National Issues; Minister's Advisory Council, Dept. of Industry, Trade and Commerce, Ottawa; Premier's Advisory Committee on Economic Future, Ontario; and the Board of Governors, York University.

THOMAS E. ARMSTRONG, Q.C.

Mr. Armstrong was born in Toronto in 1931 and graduated from University of Toronto Schools in 1950.

He was admitted to Victoria University on an English scholarship and received his Honours Arts Degree (Philosophy and English) in 1954. He subsequently entered Osgoode Hall Law School and was called to the Ontario Bar in 1958.

He was employed by the Federal Department of Justice and in 1959 joined the law firm of Messrs. Jolliffe, Lewis & Osler. In 1969 Mr. Armstrong set up a law firm in partnership with Lennox A. MacLean, specializing in labour relations. This firm represented many Canadian and International unions before the Ontario and the Canada Labour Relations Boards in arbitrations

and before the Courts.

Mr. Armstrong was appointed Chairman of the Ontario Labour Relations Board in May 1974. During his term with the Board he directed a major re-organization of the Board's procedures and participated in a review of the Labour Relations Act which led to major legislative changes in June 1975.

On January 1, 1976, Mr. Armstrong was appointed Deputy Minister of Labour.

BILL HORNER

Bill Horner is Assistant Director of the General Motors Department of the United Automobile Workers of America. He has been a UAW member for 39 years, has been President of the Tarrytown, New York, GM Assembly Division local union and since 1963 in the GM Division of UAW with major responsibility for representing the Fisher Body Division at UAW headquarters. At Tarrytown he was a city councilman for 10 years.

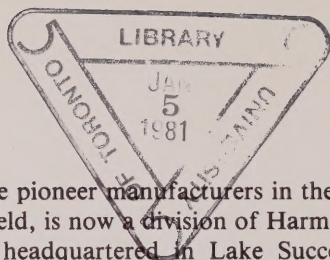
He has played a major role in the development of the GM/UAW QWL program, which currently has projects active in over 80 plants in the United States.

SIDNEY HARMAN

Dr. Sidney Harman has been a successful industrialist, educator and senior public service executive, earning a strong reputation in the fields of overall management, executive development, public policy development, marketing, finance, labour-management relations, and quality of working life.

Dr. Harman spent two years as Under Secretary of Commerce of the U.S. during a critical period in world history. His accomplishments in this position included the implementation of programs to revitalize the ailing American shoe industry, and the development of public sector QWL programs.

Dr. Harman founded Harman Kardon, Inc. in 1953. That



firm, one of the pioneer manufacturers in the high fidelity music reproduction field, is now a division of Harman International Industries, Inc., headquartered in Lake Success, New York, of which Dr. Harman is President and Chief Executive Officer.

Of particular interest is the company's pioneering in new forms of management-labour relationships and worker participation. His efforts in this respect have established him as a pioneer in the field of quality of working life, and as an international expert on the subject. The Bolivar plant in Tennessee, where a QWL project was established with the United Auto Workers in 1973, has received publicity throughout the world.

WILLIAM A. DIMMA (Chairman of the morning session)

William Dimma has been President and Chief Operating Officer of A.E. LePage Limited since January 1979. He has had a distinguished career in the fields of business and academia. He holds a B.A.Sc. from the University of Toronto, an M.P.P. and a D.B.A. from Harvard University, and an M.B.A. from York University. He has been Executive Vice-President and Director of Union Carbide Canada Limited, Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Administrative Studies at York University; and President and Director of Torstar Corporation and Toronto Star Newspapers Limited. He is currently Chairman and Director of Polysar Limited. Mr. Dimma is on the Executive Committee of the Economic Council of Canada and is a member of the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economic Future (Ontario).

STEWART COOKE (Chairman of the afternoon session)

Stewart Cooke became Director of District 6 (Ontario) of the United Steelworkers of America in June 1, 1977, following 30 years as a leading figure in the province's labour movement. He left studies in law and economics to organize for the U.S.W.A. in Hamilton after service in World War II. He is an accomplished negotiator and pioneer in the fields of union education and workplace safety and health conditions.



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400 University Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1T7